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DIXIE'S TUPPERWARE PARTY

AN AP ARTS REVIEW: DixieSells Tupperware And Laughs In `Dixie's Tupperware Party'

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(AP) The idea that Tupperware parties still exist, albeit mostly online these days may seem surprising to those who associate the festively colored bowls with 1950s housewives.

Enter Dixie Longate, the Tupperware party hostess that has one foot in the '50s (floral-print apron and bouffant hair) and one decidedly in the New York off-off-Broadway scene of present day (she's a drag queen with a checkered past who shamelessly exploits her sick son by Web cam to entice people to buy her wares).

Dixie, played by actor Kris Andersson, is all smiles and sweet Southern sugar as she mills about the audience before the start of "Dixie's Tupperware Party" at Ars Nova Theater.

But when she mounts her living room set complete with wood-paneled walls, pale blue carpeting and a digital fireplace (brilliantly constructed by Cameron Anderson and Jacob Pinholster), she immediately

switches into saleswoman mode and off she goes, like a deranged portrait of suburban hell hopped up on crystal meth.

In between her sales pitches for the Rock 'N Serve microwavable containers and the Rectangular Cake Taker, Dixie shares tidbits of her former life as an ex-convict with several children living in a trailer park in Alabama, snapping her gum the whole time with an insouciant charm.

The formula is a little pat by now, mining alcoholism and loose sexual mores for humor has been a staple of the off-off-Broadway stage for some time, from Kiki & Herb to last month's one-woman show by Bridget Everett. But Dixie maintains the laughter through her marvelous improvisational skills, especially in exchanges with audience members.

During one such moment, she stops the show to answer questions from people about their "food-storage needs." She responds to such queries as whether Tupperware comes in

non-colored, transparent varieties, then excoriates the questioner for leading a mundane life without the joys of color.

It's the biggest laugh she gets during the otherwise scripted one-man show, co-written by New York playwright Elizabeth Meriwether.

Under the skillful direction of Alex Timbers, Dixie's party moves along at a speedy clip, interspersing Tupperware presentations with a brief history of the food-storage containers and games involving audience participation. (Just a warning: Don't sit by the aisle if you have stage fright.) The festivities wrap up and the guests have their coats back on in a brisk 80 minutes, just before Dixie's jokes begin to wear thin.

And in case one feels the desire to buy something (Dixie is surprisingly persuasive in extolling the virtues of her product line), there are Tupperware order forms on the chairs.